REMARKS

Claims 7, 9 to 18, and 20 to 22 are pending, of which claims 7 and 20 to 22 are independent. Favorable reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

This amendment is being filed in response to the Advisory Action dated December 23, 2008. In that Advisory Action, it was said that "Prior art Moratis, 3533966 reads on the amendment of claim 20". We respectfully disagree for at least the following reasons.

Claim 20 requires, among other things, that removing the binder be performed at a temperature of < 600° C. Moratis is not understood to disclose or to suggest at least this feature of independent claim 20.

More specifically, regarding temperatures, Moratis describes the following:

> ing the pellet in a furnace and, in a two stage sintering operation, first heating the pellet at a rate not less than 350° F. per hour in a protective atmosphere such as argon, nitrogen or helium to a temperature in the range [1]
>
> from 2000° F. to 2500° F. for a period of from ½ to 4 hours and, second, subjecting the pellet to an oxidizing atmosphere at a temperature of from 1830° F. to 2470° F. for from 10 minutes to 1 hour.
>
> The sintering operation may alternatively be carried out in a single stage under a controlled atmosphere of argon-oxygen or nitrogen-oxygen in the range of 60 to 90 parts of argon or nitrogen and the balance 40 to 10 parts of oxygen. This procedure provides closer process control than the two stage sintering operation. In this case sintering would be carried out for a period of from ½ to 4 hours at a temperature of from 2000° F. to 2500° F. [2]

[1] Col. 2, lines 69 to 72
[2] Col. 3, lines 1 to 13

Thus, Moratis describes sintering in a range of 2000° F to 2500° F, and oxidizing at 1830° F to 2470° F. By contrast, independent claim 20 recites removing the binder at a temperature of <600° C, where 600° C is about 1112° F. Thus, claim 20 requires less than about 1112° F. By contrast, Moratis is sintering and oxidizing at temperature far in excess of 1112° F.

Furthermore, Moratis does not describe temperature conditions under which a binder is removed. Given the high temperatures involved in sintering and oxidizing, one might infer that such high temperatures are used throughout manufacture; however, since there is no disclosure in Moratis about binder removal, it is impossible to say one way or another whether binder removal happens at a temperature of less than 600° C.

For at least the foregoing reasons, claim 20 is believed to be patentable over Moratis. Since the remaining claims were not mentioned in the Advisory Action, it is assumed that they remain patentable over the art.

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050, referencing attorney docket no. 14219-068US1.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: January 13, 2009

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